



Security Council

Distr.: General
30 March 2004
English
Original: French

Letter dated 29 March 2004 from the Permanent Representative of Côte d'Ivoire to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to enclose herewith a copy of the address delivered by H.E. Mr. Laurent Gbagbo, President of the Republic, following the demonstrations of 25 March 2004 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you could have the address published as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Philippe Djangone-Bi
Ambassador
Permanent Representative



Annex to the letter dated 29 March 2004 from the Permanent Representative of Côte d'Ivoire to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Address to the nation by President Gbagbo following the street demonstrations of 25 March 2004

Three days ago I made a heartfelt appeal to the parties and movements that had called a March for March 2004. The organizers of the march were quite obviously in violation of the decree issued by the Council of Ministers on 11 March prohibiting street demonstrations, for the purpose of preserving public order in an already-fragile political context. Despite that appeal, and with no regard for procedures in that area, they refused to change their watchword.

Despite interventions by the United Nations, the Organization of la Francophonie, the Monitoring Committee for the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement, the moral authorities of the country, the Nigerian Minister for Foreign Affairs, special envoy of President Obasanjo and President John Kufuor of Ghana, Acting President of ECOWAS, who had come to meet them in person to ask them to refrain from demonstrating, they refused to do so.

Once again, they have caused the Ivorian people anguish and pain. At the end of that sad day police records showed several deaths, especially among the forces of order and the civilian population. There were also many injured. I call for a full investigation into these tragic and unnecessary events.

Tonight I would like to wish the injured a speedy recovery and to extend the compassion of the entire nation to the victims' families.

And so deaths occurred. Deaths that are all the more tragic because there was nothing to justify the demonstrations held on Thursday 25 March, except a deliberate attempt to carry the insurrection to the heart of the Republic and to prolong the people's suffering.

I note that, since the Linas-Marcoussis Agreements were signed, we have launched, together with all the political parties and rebel movements, in a peace process that is well under way.

The Agreement, despite the reservations surrounding it, which I have always acknowledged, is being applied. This is what is bringing us the support of the international community today. The United Nations Security Council has just decided to send the Blue Helmets to Côte d'Ivoire, to help us bring about disarmament and prepare the 2005 elections. This means that we are well on our way out of this crisis.

If we have come this far, it is because we have earned the international community's trust. The Government of Côte d'Ivoire has consistently shown itself capable of ensuring that State institutions function, for the benefit of all. The purpose of our resistance, the resistance of our youth, the resistance of our women, the combat waged by our defence and security forces, has always been to protect the State and the vitality of our institutions. May I once again express the nation's homage to every Ivorian.

To the defence and security forces who have once again shown their loyalty, I express my warmest congratulations for the restraint with which they performed their duty.

The events of 25 March were obviously nothing to do with a peaceful demonstration. In truth, they were a covert attempt to let the rebellion into Abidjan and to undermine the foundations of the State, to ruin the efforts that the people of Côte d'Ivoire, its army and head of State have been making for nearly two years.

How else can we interpret the initiators' insistence on scheduling these demonstrations, when they could not have been unaware of the consequences. There is a diabolical logic at work, whereby the lives of innocent persons are exposed and the future of Côte d'Ivoire jeopardized in an effort to get at me.

One cannot say one is in favour of peace and stir up an insurrection against the institutions of the Republic. One cannot say one is in favour of peace and send young people to their deaths over and over again. One cannot say one is in favour of peace in Côte d'Ivoire and work for the collapse of the State. One cannot invoke the Constitution and march against the Constitution and the rules that give it effect.

The basis for the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement is to bring together and unite Ivorians and not to give every individual the power to claim his share of Côte d'Ivoire. That political compromise gave us a Government of National Reconciliation whose primary purpose is to run the State with a view to restoring territorial unity and preparing for the 2005 elections.

The Constitution makes the President of the Republic the guarantor of national unity. My duty is to see to it that this country regains its unity, domestic peace and the conditions for economic prosperity on which our common future depends.

I call on everyone to rise above the rumours being circulated in an attempt to set Ivorians against each other. We are ensuring the security of all, of all our fellow citizens, whether they are from the North, the South, the West, the East or the Centre, as well as the security of all those who do us the kindness of living with us in Côte d'Ivoire. And so I am asking everyone to stay calm. We have to break out of this cycle of violence. People can go about their daily tasks because the defence and security forces are there to protect them.

If we want peace today, and if we want peace to be achieved through the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement, we all know what remains to be done. The draft laws giving effect to the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement have already been transmitted to the National Assembly, an extraordinary session of which was convened by me.

I want the Government to get back to work. I call on the parties and movements that have suspended their ministers' participation in the Government to return to their place.

Together, we must continue and complete the Marcoussis process. Together, in dignity, we must receive the United Nations Blue Helmets, who are coming to support us in the disarmament process. Together, we must move towards the reunification of the country and the preparation of the 2005 elections.

I would like once again to express our gratitude to the States and institutions that have placed their trust in Côte d'Ivoire, in particular the United Nations, the

European Union, the African Union, ECOWAS and France, whose support is more precious than ever today.

I want peace for Côte d'Ivoire.

Because I want peace, I again call upon the signatories of the memorandum to enter into talks. I received their memorandum on 22 March. A meeting was scheduled for 29 March. I will therefore be expecting them on Monday, 29 March at 4 p.m. at the Palace of the President of the Republic. If they wish to see me earlier, I am ready to receive them.

